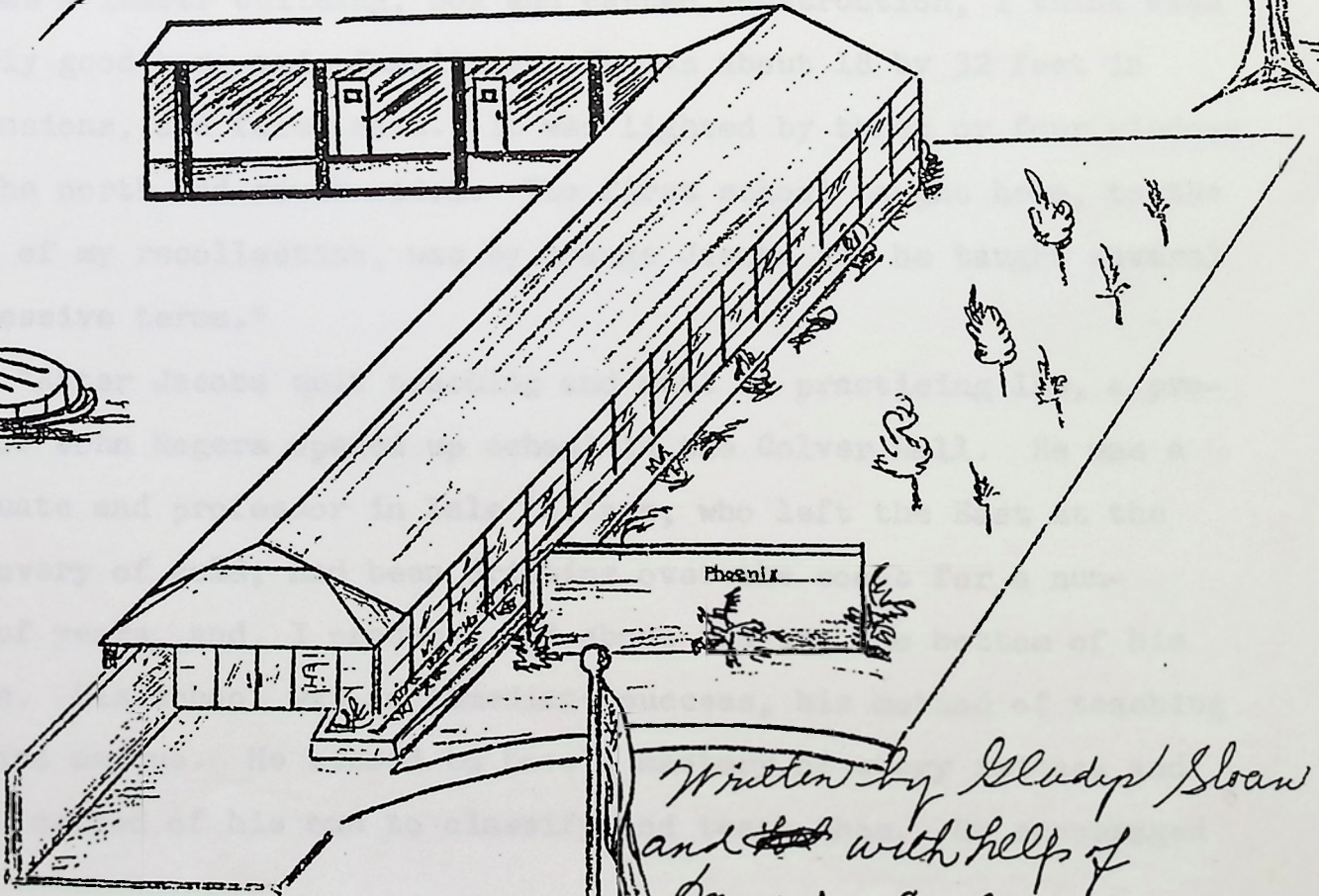
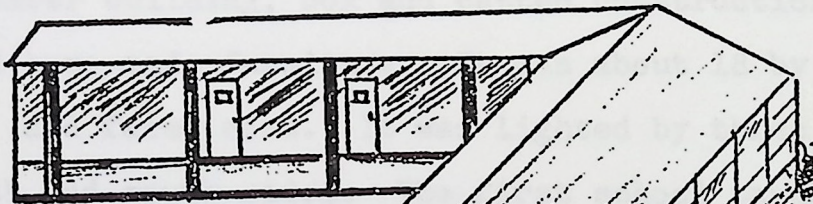


To

1960?



Written by Gladys Sloan  
and ~~the~~ with help of  
Marine Corlies (Mrs. Gung)



Certainly it is a far cry from the first school in Phoenix to the present educational facilities. Many hands and hearts have had a part in the great changes which have taken place.

"The first school house was built by the settlers near what is now Talent. It was of rough logs with cloth covered windows on two sides. Its floor was of slabs, benches of slabs with legs of round sticks inserted in auger holes, no backs. The desks were simply rough plank tables. There being no school districts yet established, it was started as a subscription school and the name of Eden given to the school. Miss Mary Hoffman (later Mrs. George Vining) was the first teacher."

"The school house in "Gasburg," (Phoenix) the Lindley school house, was built sometime in the late fifties. It stood about the same place now occupied by the Phoenix Church, the pioneer church. It was a lumber building, box and batten construction, I think with fairly good home-made furniture. It was about 18 by 32 feet in dimensions, and faced east. It was lighted by three or four windows on the north and south sides. The first school taught here, to the best of my recollection, was by Orange Jacobs and he taught several successive terms."

"After Jacobs quit teaching and went to practicing law, a professor John Rogers opened up school in the Colver Hall. He was a graduate and professor in Yale College, who left the East at the discovery of gold, had been drifting over the coast for a number of years, and, I presume, had about reached the bottom of his purse. His school was an immediate success, his method of teaching new and unique. He seemed to have a mastery of every science and had a method of his own to classify and teach them. He encouraged



studying out loud in school and elsewhere, claiming that pupils as absorbed in their studies as they should be would not be disturbed by the recital of others. He encouraged mass rehearsals and had the little scholars talking and quoting Latin phrases. He was quite religious, opening the school with prayer, when he insisted on bowed heads and closed eyes, his own being always open and watching vigilantly for any infraction of the rules. At times he was nervous and hard to please as though under a strain--at other times full of smiles. Soon after his school ended the cause of his nervousness and instability was discovered in the garret just above the platform where his desk stood, to which a small trap door gave him easy access. There were found several empty whiskey bottles."

Quotations from Marjorie Neil Helms' Early Days in Phoenix, Oregon and in which she quoted from Orsen Stearns' "Reminiscences of Pioneer Days and Early Settlers of Phoenix and Vicinity".

Following the school in Colver Hall was a framed unpainted box building on the site of the present Phoenix Elementary School. ✓

"The outside walls were one by twelve boards with batten cracks. There were some holes in the walls as witness John Olwell put his top string through a hole, went outside and attached a small bell, came back and was very busy studying. The bell would tinkle but John was innocent. The seats and desks were soft pine and were well carved and decorated with knife marks." (From a letter to Mrs. Helms from Albion Kahler)

"Some of the teachers in this early school were Maggie Sargent, Fitz and Mona Cooper, Bryan Jolly Sharp. Sharp rode a horse nine miles to school from Jacksonville. Robert Gray, another teacher, loved to play town ball so if we were playing at noon, we tried to have him on the side at bat so as to get a longer hour. One day the hour lasted until four o'clock when we quit and went home. Next came



A.D. Kyle, well educated, a fine penman and a good teacher. Dorothy Kahler wrote that "we girls were always awed by his elaborate signatures in Mama's Album" (from the Albion Kahler letters to Mrs. Helm). Walter Gore was the teacher for all the grades in 1881. He was Anna Towne Smith's first teacher and she is living at the present time in the old family home on Second and Church Streets.

The little frame school house must have sufficed until 1888 when a fine two story, two thousand dollar frame school house was built. The first teacher upstairs where the upper grades were, was a Mr. Longbottom. Under him the school was quiet and all the pupils studied. ✓

Others teachers in the years 1881-1903 were: Sam Sherril, B.R. Stevens, Mr. Shidler, Arthur Soule, Maette Giltson, Jessie Good, Emma Coleman, Anna Harver, Zella Cheney, E.E. Smith, Lester Newton, W.R. Chase, Miss Louise Janerie, Hattie Eaton and S.R. Robbins. Professor G.A. Stannard was principal the last term in the old building.

Enrollments were around eighty students during the nineties in the winter seasons but spring and fall enrollments were smaller due to the need of the students to work in the fields and other occupations. The school term varied in length owing to several things but averaged about five months a year. When the district ran out of money the school would be closed for that term.

The Barnes Reader put out by the American Book Company was one of the textbooks in use and they were not changed every six years as the policy is today but were in use for periods of twenty years or so. Spelling and English were included as a part of the reader. Barnes also put out the United States History



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In February, 1906, the Phoenix School Board was elected as the board of trustees for the Phoenix Cemetery and conducted that business along with the school districts business until June, 1930, when it was decided to form a Phoenix Cemetery Association separate from the jurisdiction of the school board.

An interesting item about some of the former members of the Phoenix School Board are noted in the fact that Henry F. Stancliffe who served in the nineties and the early nineteen hundreds had a son, Bert Stancliffe, who served on the board during the thirties and until 1947. Another family, the Stevens' did the same thing. Interest in education has always been of prime importance in Phoenix, from the pioneers down to the present generations.

Phoenix had a ninth grade in 1901, and had a graduating class of six members but discontinued the ninth grade until 1909.

In 1903 there was one eighth grade graduate, Bert Stancliffe, and he had to attend the ninth grade in Talent. He walked or rode his bicycle to Talent and graduated as the only boy, along with three girls.

President Mulkey of the Normal School at Ashland came and asked him to attend school there, and for his tuition the president accepted a sow and seven pigs which had the run of the campus while they were maturing for slaughter.

The frame building was replaced in 1907-1908, by a two story brick building which included four rooms and an auditorium. Four teachers were employed for several years until in 1927, the top floor was torn off and the building remodeled to eight rooms. Some teachers of this period were Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Tyrrel, (Mrs.) Mona Ferns, (Mrs.) Edith Fish, (Mrs.) Edith Thompson. Mr. Tyrrel was principal of grade school for several years: followed by Mr. D.R. Sloan and Mr. Eldred Colver.

Early basketball games were played in the old Woodman Hall, now the Grange Hall, so that the erection of a permanent concrete gymnasium was another milestone. The final cost of the building was \$7,700. It was dedicated on April 5, 1924, to the soldiers in Phoenix who served in World War I. Phoenix now had the first modern gymnasium in the Rogue River Valley; at a time when Medford High School was using the Medford Armory for its contests.

With increased growth in the area, and consolidation with nearby districts, new building programs were initiated. In 1948, sixteen acres of land, at five hundred dollars an acre, were purchased from Mr. Roy Bolz. A bond issue of \$252,000 was approved for the construction of a new high school and gymnasium on this land.

Consolidation with Independence and North Phoenix came in 1947-1948, Fern Valley 1948-1949, and Wagner Creek in 1950-1951.

In 1954, a new primary building was built; two more rooms were added to this building in 1956.

For some comparisons: In 1916, the first graduating class under an accredited high school had four graduates, the class of 1958, had forty-nine. They had four grade school teachers and three high school teachers. There are now fifteen teachers in the high school and twenty-five in the elementary. In 1946-47, before consolidations began the school census was 415; for the year 1958-59, there were 1,106 children on the census rolls. It is now rated a first class district. Mr. Ernest James is the school superintendent and Mr. John Myers, the elementary principal.



Phoenix High School was opened in September, 1909, with nine freshmen. The classes of algebra, general history, English and book-keeping met in the eighth grade room of the brick (four room) building. Mr. G. A. Stannard was principal.

During the term 1910-1911, the same principal with four new freshmen met in the same room.

In the third year, three new subjects were added: Latin, physical geography, and geometry. There were sixteen pupils. Mr. F. W. Roberts was principal.

The principal in the year 1912-1913 was Mr. Agar. Seven pupils attended and botany and civics were added. There were sixteen enrolled the next year and the classes were held in the room on the ground floor. The following year, at the middle of the second semester, the high school moved into the new building which was purchased from the Christian Church and remodeled. Two new teachers were added at that time, Mr. G. Scobey and Miss Stella Denzer.

During the term 1915-1916, the high school became an accredited four year high school with thirty-six students. There were four in the first graduating class. Typing, shorthand, physics and domestic art were added. The principal was Mr. Mathews.

In 1916-1917, there were forty-nine enrolled and Miss Susanne Homes (Carter) joined the faculty. Miss Homes taught four terms and later became county school superintendent of Jackson County. She was a much loved educator who did a great deal to improve schools in southern Oregon.

From 1918-1921, Mr. Milam was principal with two other teachers on the faculty and an enrollment of about thirty students.

In 1921, Avar Whitman and his sister joined the faculty.

The term 1923-1924, Mr. J. W. Kerns became principal and Mrs. Morse and Mrs. Dickey were engaged as teachers. This year Phoenix Memorial Hall was built for the purpose of athletics and entertainment.

Mr. Kerns was principal in 1924-1925. The subjects at this time were Latin I and II, English I, II, III, IV, algebra I and II, shorthand, American history, modern and medieval history, botany, arithmetic, physics, and geometry.

Mr. E. Avar Whitman came back to Phoenix as school principal in 1925. Under his guidance and vision the school became recognized as one of the best in the valley. He promoted music and art programs which were outstanding at that time. Such operettas as "The Pirates of Penzance," and "The Mikado" were given. In the dramatic field, royalty plays such as "Peg O' My Heart" and "The Importance of Being Ernest" were given, while in the area of forensics an outstanding debate team was organized. Mr. Whitman remained a foremost educator in Jackson County until he went to Linfield College as an instructor in 1936. He later became registrar, which position he holds at this time.

Following Mr. Whitman were Rolla Reedy, Floyd Barrett, Lyle Lindley, under whom consolidation with nearby rural schools began. Donald Hembre followed Mr. Lindley and it was under his administration that the new high school was built in 1948-1949. Mr. Ernest James came in 1950, to meet the challenge of expanding enrollments, new building programs and need for increased faculty personnel.

During 1956, a new annex to house a very popular vocational agriculture program was added. In 1957, a new addition was also added to the high school to take care of the music department.



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With the activation of the School Reorganization Law passed by the 1958 Legislature, the Phoenix Schools are now faced with the alternatives of either becoming a part of the Medford School system through the provisions of the School Reorganization Law, or consolidating with the Talent Schools to form a single administrative unit with the high school remaining in Phoenix. This issue is expected to be settled before 1961.

Phoenix High School has kept in step with the times by trying to meet the needs of each student with an expanded curriculum.

Written by Gladys Sloan  
Maxine Corliss